



[Ruth Cutler and family papers.](#)

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Ruth Cutler Letters

November - December 1918

Typed by Pam Fricke
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Ruth Cutler, 1890 – 1918, was a second generation St. Paulite, born into a family of privilege. She lived in a grand house on Summit Avenue, attended private schools, and travelled to Europe and Cape Cod in the summers. Ruth was also a photographer, sailor, tinker, and the first "career woman" in her family. Following graduation from Vassar College, Ruth worked for a social service organization in St. Paul. She wanted to serve in World War I, but she did not have the requisite nursing skills, so she took courses at the University of Minnesota.

She had to set her plans aside in early 1918, when her mother fell ill. After her mother's death in April, Ruth persevered to find a way to serve, and finally, she and a college friend, were accepted by the Red Cross as volunteers. Ruth and her friend Prud did not leave for France until late November. They took a ship to England and then to France. Ruth died of complications from the flu on Dec. 23, 1918. She was only 28. Ruth's almost-daily letters capture her keen observations, enthusiasm for her work and love of family and friends. When they end abruptly just before her death, the reader experiences a tremendous sense of loss, knowing how many Ruth had touched and what she might have accomplished had she lived longer.

Ruth's father, Edward H. Cutler, was a founding partner of Noyes Brothers & Cutler, a whole drug supply firm. The corner building with imposing arches still stands today. The family home at 360 Summit Avenue no longer exists, but the home's carriage house remains; it was converted in the late 1960s to a residence by Ruth's niece, Lucy Cutler Sargent Fricke.

AT SEA – Saturday, November 23, 1918

Dear, dear Father and Amelia,

It's hard to know where to begin, as there is so awfully much to tell you, and I did not have time to write again as I thought I might. Tibs has sent my telegrams by now, and I received yours, but no special delivery letter. Thank you just the same. That sounds so feeble. You don't know how glad I have been for all the messages, but I won't take time expatiating.

Do you know that I was the last passenger to board the ship, and perhaps the last Red Cross woman worker to be sent over for a time? Headquarters must have known of the expected orders, for they moved heaven and earth to get us on this boat. Prud was three days ahead of me on one point, but even her papers had to be rushed through. After spending Thursday morning at the Red Cross where they were all just as nice and obliging as could be, we spent the p.m. shopping as I wrote you and sewing on tapes in the evening till well into the morning. Next morning a few last things and our sailing papers, but no passports. Most unheard of proceeding. And then the fun began.

The boat is a perfect beauty, new this year and not at all crowded. Prud and I have a wonderful three-person stateroom together. Travelling de luxe believe me, and if this is a sample of what's to come, don't worry about us, for the crossing will be pure joy. There are seventeen other Red Cross women on board and out of that number, there are four Vassar 1912s, one especially who I know well and you may remember Louise Alden and then Ruth Skinner of Holyoke. Isn't that strange. There is a Louisa Donald from N.Y. who rooms near us, and who is a peach and the Eliot girl is here, too. But there are many more who seem very attractive. The only other group seems to be a lot of grey-headed YM men. It's the nicest family party you ever knew.

As some papers got mixed, ones we should have had going to another boat and vice versa, I have already been doing some typewriting for our group leader, so you see Peggy is proving her use already, and tomorrow I am promised a lot more work with lists, etc.

We were up on deck till lunch time, cold at first, but nice and warm afterwards, It was most interesting going out of the harbor, of course. I didn't tell you that Jack went around with me all yesterday p.m. And stayed a while in the evening. It was a great visit. Then Tibs spent the night. I packed till after one in a small room with an extra cot for Tibs. Waking up at 5:30 I got up, finished packing and making last arrangements. And as I said, here we are.

Please thank Hannah for all her trouble on my account that evening and tell her how much I appreciated it. I was going to speak of it in my letter from the steamer but you see my time was otherwise occupied.

Tibs will describe our uniform. It isn't handsome, but that doesn't worry me as do high collars. I'm nearly dying of them, my neck is so raw. No doubt I will get toughened to them in time. Speaking of de luxe, we even have our trunks in our staterooms, something we were warned would be impossible, so you see we will be warm enough and it will allow our stowing away heavy duds before landing, which means we won't have to tote quite so much in the way of bulk. Did you hear the joke? When I got back to my room yesterday I found a ukulele sitting there for me to take. I thought the idea was for me to make music for "our boys" and that it would vie for place on my poor back with Peggy. But not at all. I was simply meant to take it over for another member of the unit and found room for it in my trunk. Fancy that. As a matter of fact I had a great deal of extra space and could have gotten all my belongings into a steamer trunk. You never can tell till you try.

The hospital hut work is apparently a cross between social work with the wounded and canteen work and perhaps nurses aid work. But they say, be prepared for absolutely anything."

Enough for now as I want to go up on dock again. It is too lovely to be missing.

Such heaps of love to all. I have only tried to send a short note to Elinor just so she will get as early a word as possible from me, but I won't take time to go into details. Have some reports to make the Unit, etc. Two money accounts mix me up so horribly.

AT SEA – Sunday, November 24, 1918

We've just had service and I'm going back again on deck soon. I just hate to miss a moment of this glorious weather. Last evening we went up to the bow of the boat and watched the phosphorescence. I've never seen it so glorious, and all the stars seemed to be out and the night a heavenly one. We went to bed in good season though as we wanted to get caught up with the sleep we missed. First though there were hooks and eyes to be sewed on,- that got crowded out of the last few days. A stateroom to ourselves with all the conveniences and the most comfortable beds you ever slept in. Needless to say we didn't peep till morning, but I did manage to get up in time to go out to the bow before breakfast. The trip must be about as dissimilar from those made even a month ago as can be imagined. It seems too soft and comfortable, but I guess our turn at inconvenience may come before long, as we are reveling in this.

I did not tell you of the watch. Not much of a surprise to you, ADC – anyway – but it was to me, for I had no ideas that the class would do such a thing and that they would choose exactly the kind I would have chosen myself. It is of

course flatter than my makeshift wristwatch, and I can see it at night even without my glasses. It has a khaki-colored cloth strap and is very comfortable and can be easily adjusted, etc. Altogether just right. Prud had a watch so she was given instead a "limousine case" and here was I thinking that even a trench mirror as rather a frivolity.

There isn't a vast amount of interest to tell you even were there no censors still reading over our letters. We can't imagine why they must still be censored as we know nothing that it would seem unreasonable to impart. And that's one reason why I'm giving you such a stupid letter. Really, this life is no relation at all to the last few days. When I think of the hair-breadth escape we had, well Prud and I just chortle over it even now. They say I made record time in New York.

Goodbye again until later.

AT SEA – Monday, November 25, 1918

We spent yesterday afternoon, Miss Donald and I, up at the very bow of the boat, just watching the coloring and talking. It was curious how Prud and I just chanced to meet her in the custom's office, and how we all took to each other right away-and that then we should room next door and sit all together at table. Perhaps we shall run across her again during the year even though we are split up in France.

We went to bed again early last night and found that we were still sleepy this morning. But the ship's newspaper at breakfast helped wake us up., then we had a game of shuffleboard with some Y men who had never seen the thing before and were quite put out that we beat them at it. After that we loafed on the deck and I started *The Tree of Heaven* which Ruth Skinner has lent me to read. Whatever the rest of the book, I like some of the character sketches at the beginning and that was about as far as I got when I began to grow drowsy so got up and had a game of rope quoits.

We just discovered that the Mrs. Porter and her daughter on board and with the R.C. are the wife and daughter of the William Porter who wrote the series of articles of the Atlantic on shock at the front. They are not a bit as I would have imagined them, but then celebrities never are and these are only vicarious celebs.

The Y men are getting up some sort of a stunt party for some night this week and came around to see if any of us had any parlor tricks to offer, but whether honestly or not, we all professed our inability to perform. I doubt if we get off that easy.

It's another ridiculously calm day and drizzling, not enough to really bother us, only enough to keep us from the bow and under cover of the top deck. The temperature is very mild and the captain at whose table we sit thinks that the weather will continue all the way. Aren't we most fortunate? We will probably land Monday, although there's no telling.

Speaking of sitting at the captain's table, it is funny the Quaker meeting we have. We are all together at that table and the rest of it is filled with Y men at what side tables are used. Our deck chairs are on starboard side and theirs on port. But needless to say, things don't stay quite so stationery and now that the seasick ones are beginning to reappear on deck, the boat has livened up again, as Prud remarked, she herself not having felt any too "peppy" yesterday.

AT SEA – Tuesday, November 26, 1918

Rougher today and somewhat colder. Before breakfast I was out at the bow watching the coloring and the big swells. The coloring reminded me of Chatham. After breakfast we went to the bridge at the very stern of the boat and got some good motion there. While we were watching, the gunners oiled up the six-inch stern guns and later in the morning they threw overboard a burning target and we were treated to some target practice. I imagine that is the nearest we will get to hearing any guns. We are making good speed and unless we run into a storm, the rumor now seems to be that we will land Saturday night instead of Monday.

After that we did some fast walking to get warm again and then sat and read until we got too chilly. It really isn't half as cold as my last trip over and nothing to complain of, only I find I like to keep on the move a good deal of the time.

We had such a hectic evening yesterday. I told you of the call for stunts. We found we had to be good sports, so instead of doing anything singly, decided to get something up as a group and started to work on writing a song and draping our stateroom curtains for our costumes. That would have been enough for one evening, but the Y men wanted an informal dance. None of us wanted to go but we hated to appear snobby and offish, so we suffered. I was lucky enough to get off dancing. There are a few ex-professors on board and some regular army officers who are interesting but most of the Y men are bores when they are not worse. But part of our job is to mix, so we try to, but all of us girls with one or two exceptions would prefer our own society.

By the way, please tell Betsey her oatmeal cookies are much admired by all who try them. Love, RC

Date??

When we got on deck this morning, we found a heavy sea on and my but it was great, dark blue and greens, all threaded over with white foam and the wind blowing spray from every crest. Luckily we are going with the wind, or they say many more would be sick than are already and besides it would retard our speed considerably and that is a consideration to those who feel wobbly. It was all we could do sometimes to turn the corner on the force of the gale that was blowing. Sometimes we would stop at the stern just to watch the waves. It looked as though we were on a high mountain and saw peak after peak of snowcapped ranges with mist hanging over them. Then we watched the distance get thicker and thicker and soon a hailstorm overtook us and not long after left us as suddenly as it came. We have had gorgeous seas effects all day and by keeping walking one can enjoy them. But I don't see how people can stay long in their chairs, even this cold penetrates so. We can't help remarking that the deck of the ship looks warmer to us than the water. We're in luck all right. But we have such a roll on I have to watch out constantly that this suitcase doesn't lurch over on the floor and Peggy with it. And at dinner we had only plate rails and we almost had to chase our plates over the table.

During the morning I made some 25 copies of the song we wrote, then we all gathered in the saloon and rehearsed our parts for this evening. Our costumes are to be made out of our portierce and curtains. Won't we make a hit.

We've found another awfully nice girl on board, a Julia Stamm, one of the two Y girls. Her sister graduated from Vassar this year. But poor thing, she has trouble with mal de mer. The other Y woman is much older and also very nice, a Mrs. Nease.

The children of the English woman who is returning from India, after a five week crossing to San Fran and then the trip across the continent are having a hard time today. They aren't easily entertained or for long. As it is too cold for them to be out, the mother is having her hands full.

AT SEA – Wednesday, November 27, 1918

(After I wrote you yesterday. . .) I went to the library to read and read until I knew I should fall asleep if I kept on. So I routed out Ruth Skinner and we walked and walked and walked around the deck and it warmed us up and wakened us as nothing else could. Then we set our heads together Prudy and I to compose a song for tonight and I enclose the result. You probably won't appreciate it, as there are very subtle hints involved.

In the evening was an entertainment and auction for the benefit of the seamen's orphanage. And quite a bit was raised, something over a hundred dollars. The auctioneer was quite good, a French Canadian who looks like a fat Indian.

AT SEA – Thanksgiving Day (Thursday, November 28), 1918

You may be sure that I thought of you all the minute I woke this morning and ever since. I read dear Elinor's note she had so thoughtfully written for today and it carried me back, if I needed any carrying, to the year ago today. How plainly I can see precious Mother there at the end of our table and how glad I am that we shall always have that to remember. I know how hard and lonely the day will seem to you all and if wishes could get me there, I should be there with you. I have just made inquiries from the purser about sending you a marconigram, but he says he can't do it. Miss Donald received one telling of the arrival of a nephew and was allowed to answer it, but I suppose they did not consider mine important enough, and of course I did not press it. Still I would have liked to have gotten a message across to you, more tangible than the one you know I am sending. Miss Conner, one of the RC nurses, has one of her watches set American time, so I shall know just how to think of you during the day. I suppose you are hardly more than through breakfast by this time, while we have had Thanksgiving service. Everything was included but the Lord's Prayer and the President's Proclamation. After writing you yesterday we ran into the nicest little storm I've ever been in. Not as bad as it might have been but still quite sizable waves that sent us almost out of our chairs. We couldn't see well enough there so finally got up and stood against the railing for about the two hours, just watching the storm. It was glorious. But I imagine it has impeded our progress and once again we seem due to arrive Monday. We will have a day or two in London and on to Paris, if things go as predicted. We don't know how long we will be in Paris before being assigned to our jobs, but will probably have some miscellaneous work given us to do while waiting for orders. But this is looking ahead a good deal. Last evening after dinner was the concert and our "skit" came at the end and was quite a success. Our blue costumes were a surprise to everyone and quite a change from our drab uniforms. By the way, my neck seems to have gotten toughened now, so that I can put a collar on in the morning without wincing.

We had a little ginger-ale party next door after the concert, and then went to bed, where we rolled about during the whole night. I may be overcome by the English Channel, but so far I haven't felt a qualm. It was funny at tea yesterday when one of the nurses went sprawling over backwards and the china crashing

after her. She may not have thought it so funny.)

We saw some jumping fishes of some sort this morning and were allowed again up in the bow. It was rough enough last evening so that all the baths had to be cancelled and we were forbidden going to the bow, the stern or even the lower deck. All the white threads have disappeared from the waves, and they are a uniform dark blue, great round swells left over from yesterday. It is markedly warmer so that we can move about more comfortably.

I don't envy the censor having to wade through all this nor you either. Wish I had more spice to add. Love as always, RC

AT SEA – Friday, November 29

I've decided that this letter was getting too bulky for one envelope so I'm dividing it up. It looks as though you would have to take a day off to read it.

We had Thanksgiving Dinner at 7 last evening and a few toasts, drunk in water afterwards. Then Louise Alden and I decided that the deck was far preferable to movies so we walked around until we got too hot then stood by the railing watching the phosphorescence. There were not large glowing masses of it the way there were the first night but points of it the length of the ship. It looked exactly though some stray stars had fallen down out of place. The rest was inky blackness. We saw no Lauretania nor any other boat, though they said a big tanker passed us this morning before the fog shut in. The fog has been quite thick and strange to say, damp, but even so one can sit out on the sheltered side.

I've tried to get off some thank you letters and some to RC people to whom I have to write, so the day has not been wildly exciting thus far. I suppose by tomorrow we will have to begin thinking of repacking if we care do any. For my part I hate to have the trip over because I enjoy every minute of it.

Prud rushes in to say that a whale is spouting, but it will probably be a mile away by the time I get there so I'm letting it spout.

Did I happen to mention that my address will be ARC 2 rue de Rivoli until further notice? The address I left you would do just as well, but this is a bit more definite. I thought of you so much last evening and had the difference in time down to a fine point. After I go to bed at night I can almost make myself believe that I am right back at 360 curled up on the sofa or doing the firefly act upstairs.

So much love to you all. I wonder if the letters I mail here on the steamer will all reach you in the same mail. I've numbered them so you can tell the sequence. Love, RC

AT SEA – Saturday, November 30, 1918

I can't realize that today is the last day of November nor that it was just a week ago that we sailed. The time has passed very quickly in some ways while in other two weeks ago when ADC and I watched for the postman, seems like another century altogether.

To go back only as far as yesterday, however, we had tea as usual at four and then walked the deck. There was a soft blue fog which shut out everything but the foam washed up by the boat. And in the dusk we watched the lights on the ship come out and burn with a blurred yellow glow and we watched the silhouettes of the masts and rigging and of the sailors as they went about their work. It gave one such a sense of remoteness and isolation. And then we turned and watched the weird shadows along the deck and the play of light through the little panes of glass from the lounge as it lit up the shafts above the lifeboats and threw them into relief. And finally we were lured inside, when it got too dark to be interesting and no stars came out.

In the evening several people spoke telling of their experiences abroad during the war, and each one thought that the nation with whom he/she worked were the ones that really won it. Miss Emily Simmonds, a nurse, told of her work in Serbia of the typhoid epidemic there, 65% of the entire population of refugees of that section succumbed to it, of the scarcity of food, of the conveying of refugees to Marseilles with airplanes above and submarines and mines below. She is on her way again has been decorated three times etc. Mrs. William Porter, whom I mentioned before as being the wife of Dr. Porter of Atlantic fame, told of her work with the blind and deaf in Paris hospitals. Then a young Canadian, a lieutenant in the Royal Air Service, stationed at Jerusalem is just returning from a leave, told of Britain's part in the war. It was then quite late, but as it was Louise Alden's birthday, we invited her and Ruth Skinner into our room for an informal party of ginger ale and apples. The results. Great sleepiness this morning at reveille.

It is still foggy and the decks just ooze water, but it's so warm that one doesn't want an ulster even in sitting about. They were making preparations this morning for putting mine sweepers in place tomorrow when we go through the field. We had noticed queer things on deck and wondered what they were for. Now we know. It doesn't seem possible that any stray mines are around here all looks so absolutely peaceable. I spent a large part of the morning repacking my suitcase and trunk. Hope it won't burst apart before it gets to Paris and that the custom's officer won't be too rude with it, or I'll never get it together again. I've made my toting load someone lighter, but I hate to think of the excess I will get stuck for.

The enclosed poem speaks for itself. It was written by Miss Smith in answer to one the Y men posted up for our benefit. You have no idea how officious they are in their determination to be friendly and amusing (?)

It seems funny to think that all this that I've written on shipboard has not reached you yet, and funny, too, that when I do hear from you the news will all be old. I keep wondering so just how to think of you. AD you must be an expert on Harry by now. Lots of love till the next time, RC

AT SEA – Sunday, December 1, 1918

This may be my last note written on the steamer as we expect to land sometime tomorrow morning, and you can imagine what that will mean with customs and cables and trains, etc. We've seen a number of boats this morning and what look like wrecks being towed along. Once we made a huge swerve from what looked like a periscope, but was probably wreckage. The mine sweepers weren't put out after all, something didn't fit just right, but we seem none the worse for it. I plead guilty to walking the deck this a.m. in preference to going below to hear another Y sermon.

Yesterday I spent the afternoon with Julia Stamm. We found a good many mutual friends and things in common to talk about after tea. And after that it was too soaking wet outside to make walking any fun. Today it is smooth, except for choppy little white caps, which we don't feel at all but the fog still hangs on. All last night they say the foghorn was blowing but I was too sleepy to hear it. You know I've decided that I like camouflaged boats better than all white or all black ones. The rather soft blues and grays are quite pretty up on deck and not so glaring in good weather as the white and much prettier than the black. But I suppose they won't replace it when the next coat goes on.

Rumor again has it that you won't get these letters mailed on shipboard as soon as you'll bet our Liverpool letters. Do let me know just for curiosity.

Wish I had Auntie Betty's letter of introduction, in case we stop in London a day or two. You might send on any that happen to be offered. Goodbye for now. I hate to think of the trip's being almost ended. Oh so much love to all. I may soon be getting a letter from you. Am just about to write out a cable now. RC.

LIVERPOOL (Hotel Compton) – December 2, 1918

Dear dear Father and AD,

It's evening again, and we are perched in a rather dismal attic room with a feeble light in this xth rate hotel. Before telling you all about today, I'll go back

to yesterday after tea, when, after watching a superb sunset and more and more boats passing, we began to see revolving lights after dark. Scarries light and Holyhead. Then at the bar we picked up the pilot. It was really a fascinating sight, wending our way after dark in and out among lighted bell buoys, light ships, tugs, etc with the lights of the city hemming us in. The tugs bent us around a remarkable sharp bend in the docks and engineered us into a little cubbie hold sort of place all to ourselves with the most cunning stone house and chimney pots right from the stage on the dock itself and a warehouse with towers and battlements. It was much more picturesque than it would have been by day. This was about 10:15. Then we went below, but not to sleep, as we had much last packing and sewing to do and long after I got in bed, I heard our neighbors talking until the very racket of the docks seemed to put me to sleep. When I did wake up in the night to turn over, I seemed always to hear the rumble of tin cans.

At 6:30 this morning, the first bugle blew and we were at breakfast a 7. Then there was a long wait for the custom's inspector, which didn't bother us as we had nothing to "catch." We had the feeling of "I should worry" (as Ted would say). Our trunks were on the deck and we had nothing more to bother about until our representative came aboard and gave us walking orders, so we sat and talked without a care in the world. At 10 we landed, had no trouble at all with our luggage except to claim it and sit on it for a time so that the Y shouldn't walk off with it. And incidentally, they were sent to a camp here in England for several weeks much to their wrath. We're glad we're with the R.C. in more ways than one. Then we took the "overhead" to James Street Station and walked up here, trundling only Peggy, much to my relief, as my other two pieces weigh a ton and came by truck. You can image this hotel. Dingy and run down at the heel and very dirty in spots and cluttered, of course, and dismal. But it is evidently cheap, and as we are being paid for, we can understand why we are sent here. The food is substantial, if not dainty, and we are altogether so what do we care. Prud and I have a "sky parlor" (no lift) but the chambermaid assured us we were "nearer heaven" – that to repay us for the climb. The beds are humpy, of course, and none too clean, so we sleep in our bags tonight. We've just come in from the cable office. Most everyone assured me you'd get word from the R.C. first, but I told them you'd like to hear direct anyway, so I cabled "landed, love" and hope it has reached you by the time you get this. With dallying en route to Paris and nine days in crossing, do you suppose I'll have the luck to get a letter on arriving at 2 rue de Rivoli? (Hotel Regina, I believe that is.) But you've no idea what a difference these few weeks have made in our comfort. We are almost ashamed of it, the first time the boat had lights and fog horns and open portholds, etc. One of the ship's officers said he didn't feel as

though we were going to sea any more Mrs. Porter gave us an account of her trip to the US last Spring on the Leviathan- whew, it must have been a great experience. They were only six days in spite of all the zigzagging around France and Spain that they did after they shook the convoy.

No political rally for us tonight. BED. The boat still rocks.

Later

We went out then and had the grandest time in spite of the rain and the muddy streets. First we did some necessary shopping and roamed about through the "Bon Marche." Then in search of another store, we strolled all over the place and just reveled in the fog and the drizzle and the few lights which made it all so much more picturesque than our great white ways ever can. And of course we saw Bobbies and two-wheeled carts and all the rest, which thrilled me almost as much as if I had never seen them before. We were having just such a good time that we regretted having promised to turn up at the Adelphi for tea. We are on Church Street not far physically from the Adelphi. But we went there and had tea, sugarless tea, and sandwiches all for a shilling and saw all the uniforms. There were a good many Chatham aviators there, and they did make me feel a little more at home. Finally, as we were about to leave, a very nice looking R.C. official came and spoke to us, asked if we had just landed and proceeded to pump us and then in return he handed out some good square facts to us. After nine days of those inane (excuse me but it's true) Y men, it was pretty good to find a real man and an efficient one at that. I know perfectly why Emily Cochran said "Tom" said the R.C. was the only organization to be with over here. The R.C. and the Salvation Army are the only ones liked. They seem to have more Ys over here than they know what to do with, and from the specimens we saw on shipboard - well, this new attitude was all a bolt from the blue to me, but can't get away from it. But to go back, the R.C. told us we'd probably be here another day before going to London, and to be sure to see the Leviathan, which is being loaded with over 2,000 wounded soldiers to go home. They stop at Brest and put on board some 3 to 4,000 more. He says the equipment on the boat is marvelous. He also advises us to see Knotty Ash and Knotty Oak and Mosely Hill hospital here and adds that this is the best place for seeing things short of the actual front. We will see nothing of any value in London from the standpoint of our future jobs. We discussed the shortcomings of the headquarters at home, the length of time to get an applicant through, etc. and he was full of suggestions for remedying it. He told us that we were still needed in France and possibly in Belgium, Alsace Lorraine, Italy and even

Austria and German, depending on the peace. A special mission will probably go to Russia. He told us more of the work in huts than I had been able to glean before, and made us warm to it. He hinted that we might be traveling a good deal. He told us facts, which our censorship regulations have concealed heretofore about the 272,000 casualties, the 58,000 deaths from wounds, the 12,000 deaths from the influenza, etc. He inquired especially about the influenza on our ship. We had just one case: a Y man, not serious, but still a bronchial pneumonia complication. He said we were lucky, that even more heart-rending than wounds, were the deaths on the ship coming over, where the men died within a day of England, having never seen any of the fighting they had spent months training for. He told of 60 or more burials at sea on a single boat, a few R.C. and Y girls, but mostly men. We listened to him for over an hour, and I wish I could tell you more coherently what he said, but it put new heart into us and counteracted the depression of the "end of the war" and "no more women workers" feeling for us. He said, of course, we were needed. Luckily none of us were booked for England or we would be sent straight back as no transfers can be made and all our troops now in England, excepting those too ill to be moved, are being sent right back. Some of the men have been in training camps and have never gotten to France. He also gave many personal experiences with individual men to cite their regard for and trust in the R.C. and gave us actual figures showing just what it had done. We asked him for his name, and he said "just a Red Cross man," but we knew he was a divisional director, and we asked the man who has us in charge, and he told us he is Captain Kirkover. The officers in the Red Cross have military cognizance.

Prud and I have to stop to laugh now and then. I wish you could see us perched in the only two chairs with Peggies on knees, making an unearthly racket as though each were determined to beat the other. Hope to have time to write again tomorrow, but good-bye for now.

LONDON (Thackery Hotel) – Tuesday, December 3, 1918

Oh those beds of the Compton, but once we had dried out the sheets and hidden the blankets well beneath them, we got a good night's rest and didn't want to get up at all this morning. Instead of that we did drag ourselves out at 7:30 as we wanted to buy some more polo collars before 9:30 when we had to meet Lt. Kelly for orders. The polo collars are low and save our lives.

At 9:30 we were told we would not leave for London until the 2 o' clock so Prud, Louise Alden, Ruth Skinner and I took the tram out to Garston and went through the big American Red Cross hospital at Mosely Hill. It was a nice ride getting there as an old white-haired man sitting near us saw we were from

the U.S. and told us of his sister-in-law living there and then proceeded to point out things of interest, telling us where the best residence section used to be before the tramline hurt it and where there are now rows and rows of model brick tenements for about \$1.75 a week. Fancy that: you wouldn't mind living in them yourselves either, they looked so cunning.

The hospital is evidently an old vicarage sort of place on whose grounds are erected long low concrete wards, rows and rows and rows of them. The place was pretty empty after the evacuation I spoke of, but 72 new cases had just come in last night. They say the casualties of the Americans those last weeks have never been told. There was a private there from St. Paul, but I could not see him as his wound was being dressed. Some looked pretty sick, and some were walking cases. The nurse was disappointed about not into getting to France. She came two months ago from California and was about to board the channel steamer, when she was taken off to nurse flu cases and has been kept on at this hospital. She doesn't ever expect to get across. But we can't see why she minds, when she has been busy here. We couldn't stay as long as we wanted, as the hospital was about three quarters of an hour trip from the hotel, and we had to be back for a 12:30 lunch. In the meantime, others had discovered an American overseas women's club, which seemed pretty nice to them to loaf in, after the hotel, but we thought we had spent a more profitable morning than they. At 1:30 we marched off to Lime Street Station, were passed through the gates to a reserve carriage, third class, I'm glad to say. Other organizations go first class and there is much criticism. We managed to consume the time until we reached London at 6:45 very easily, looking out the window and picking corks out of ginger ale bottles, chiefly. Then we were met by another Red Cross lieutenant and after claiming our luggage, which was piled into an ambulance, we all climbed up on an old stagecoach. You can image my surprise when we stopped in front of the British museum and the Thackeray. The entrance and elevator and dining room even to the clock on the mantel haven't changed a bit, and I remember, I think, our room. Aunt Saba's and mine was on the back of the house. We are up one flight on the front of the house. Did you and Mother have it by any chance? It all seems so very familiar somehow and give me such a queer feeling. But there are four of us to share it. They are out buying a newspaper now or we could not be banging the box!

We report tomorrow morning at headquarters at 10 to learn our fate, I presume and have our passports vised, etc. The Lt told us we should probably go across in two days and we are banking on that. There are lots of rumors that we are not needed and shall be sent home. We know for a fact that they are stopping workers whose passports have not gone through Washington, as this morning at the Compton I met a Y girl, whom I had just chance to catch a

glimpse of in NY those last days. She was Elizabeth Smith of Monclair, N.J. – knew Tib's cousin Betty Manning and knew Florence Taylor, a girl in my class at college. She said her sister had applied to the Red Cross for canteen serve and that when she went to 222 found the overseas personnel closed! We keep feeling all the time that we are late, that the war is over and that we crossed de luxe. But they say hospital hut workers are still needed and some, too, to replace those who have been at it for long. We just wish we could get to work p.d.q.

I suppose there may be some sight seeing tomorrow after our reporting at headquarters but "me for a shampoo." I keep wondering just how much of London I will remember. I think quite a bit. By the way, though there are lights on the streets, they are either very few or very dim, for it is not just the fog that is responsible for the somberness. When we first reach a hotel we must sign out slips, who we are and where we are and when and where we were born. Then we sign a meat slip and then we are entitled to boiled potatoes and Brussels sprouts and citron cake. We never miss the latter having had it three nights running now. In between all is good plaice fish, and a dab of meat, but the food tonight seemed luscious.

LONDON (The Thackery) – Wednesday, December 4, 1918

We're still here, but we hope to leave tomorrow for France. We reported at headquarters this morning and for the first time were told that censorship is still on. Why haven't other officials made that plain? Everyone has the attitude that "war is over," and censorship relaxed. I certainly hope I have written nothing I shouldn't have. Our spirits are rather down again as there seems a question as to how long we will be needed over there. The Red Cross men who have been here a week on special reconstruction work, some of them are architects, are being sent back, as the French government is taking up the matter of reconstruction itself. Tomorrow morning we shall know whether we are to cross at night or wait some more. We don't like staying about without a job.

From headquarters we got shampoos and did a bit of shopping which I hope will be the last for sometime then Prud and I went to the headquarters of the British Labour Party to learn if there were any big meetings scheduled for tonight. All the big ones came off last weekend and now there are nothing but burrough meetings which would not interest us particularly. Perhaps it is just as well, as the flu is still rampant here and in Liverpool, and we were warned not to take too many chances. After lunch, Prud, Louise and I started off to "bum around" while the others went to tea at the Ritz or did other stupid things.

It was good and dark by that time, but we got some nice effects, and roamed about through every alley and lane and wind we came to and found

ourselves on Thobal's Road. Where that might be we hadn't the remotest idea until we came across a burrough map posted on a wall. And after that we spotted such whenever we could, and with great success. We found we were within easy walking distance of "home" and so came back to rest up before dinner at 7 and some necessary sewing. We are forever sewing on or reinforcing buttons, by the way!! Some of the others have gone to the theatre now but we didn't want to so here we are!

We sat at table tonight with a very interesting English woman who wanted to know about politics on our side of the water and who in turn gave us a lot of information. She says England admires Wilson tremendously and is heartily in sympathy with him coming over. The Times echoes that sentiment, too. I wish I could send you their editorial this morning, but Prud bought the last paper! We read his speech to Congress. It seems well received here from the comments we have so far heard. Of course that tickles us immensely for Prud, Louise and I seem to have very similar political views.

Prud had a man shampoo her hair this morning and she had a grand old time talking politics with him or he with her, perhaps! I had a very reticent English girl, and so half dozed to make up for lost sleep. You have no idea what a comfort this hotel is – clean beds, etc. It makes one appreciate one's blessing. But while we are herein London, we can have no meat as they thought it not worthwhile to get meat tickets for us, and the system is not the same as in Liverpool. But ham, for some unknown reason, is apparently classed with vegetables so we go down armed with saxon tablets for tea or coffee. But we have plenty of puddings! And you know how I love those!

Of course we see countless uniforms on the streets, women as well as men and they seem all, everyone one, different! Each division has a different splash of color somewhere – back or sleeve or shoulder, medical and surgical cases in hospitals, out for strolls, have blue trousers and colored neckties. Then there are Britishers, Canadians, Australians, and Yanks till your eyes fairly swim. Our English friend said even those familiar more or less with them all, got very confused and when it comes to knowing what their service stripes or decoration are – well, you might as well give it up. It is a comfort to be able to recognize our own officers and their insignia. It seems like ABC.

LONDON – Thursday, December 5, 1918

We did go across today after all. It seems that there is a great congestion both on the steamers and in the hotels at Paris. Many nations have commandeered hotels for their representatives and it is difficult to find room for us. We had expected that we would get no cabin on the boat and would have to

spend the night on a bench inside or on the deck but we were disappointed not to get there at all. Orders are, to be ready to go tomorrow p.. Hope nothing will interfere.

We didn't know what our orders would be until 11, so we had a good sleep over, and then Louise and I visited a district office of the COS, 16 Greek Street, Soho W. We had a very interesting talk with the secretary Miss Nixon and were there about an hour. Then we walked around on Regent Street in and out of almost every court we saw and finally home on Oxford Street in time for lunch. I've got a small map of London with just the principal streets and now that I have got those pretty much in my head, I feel much more at home here than I do in Minneapolis, which I've never bothered to study up on a map.

After lunch we took a bus to London Bridge. The silly little tugs with their collapsible smoke stacks amused us as much as anything. Didn't London Bridge use to have stalls and booths on it, or something? It is absolutely bare iron and not particularly interesting. The others roasted me for taking them there I am sure, even though they were too polite to say so. But we got a good view of the Tower Bridge, and so walked down there and around through the Tower gardens just before we got locked in, by the way. We liked the view of the Tower and the city from the Bridge, but we were just too late to see the Deutschland, which is in dock there, and over which one can go in cook's parties for a consideration, I presume. The last party to be admitted was coming out as we got there. Then we had a date with some of the others to meet them at the Cheshire Cheese for tea. We had the direction "Wine Office Court, Fleet Street." But it took hours to get to the place where we could take bus 15. First one broke down and we all had to pile out then there was such a jam we could hardly get another. It amazes me more all the time to think of eight of us ever getting on the same bus. And another thing I've wondered about is why the buses don't slip or turn turtle. They have no chains and even with solid rubber tires you'd think they'd skid some. And the speed they go and the way the whisk around corners. Well, we finally got off beyond the Law Courts and walked back along Fleet Street glancing up overhead at every step to spot the Cheshire Cheese. We found it. Wine Office Court and all, but no tea – only lunch and dinner, and we were betwixt and between. The other three had gotten there on time and had left 10 minutes before. So Prud decided she didn't want tea, but did want to shop. We tried and tried to get onto any Regent Street bus but two of us could make it but never three at once. So when we came to Waterloo Bridge and Aldwich, I said I was going to walk back to the hotel and let them go on, which I did via Kingsway and Holburn, and here I am. The others haven't gotten back yet. I imagine if they are ever to turn up they may have to resort to a taxi. Tomorrow, we are going back to see the Deutschland if we can get back here by 2:45.

What we live in terror of is being sent back to the USA after having gotten this far. Some are even contemplating other jobs to keep them here for a time at least. But we call them the alarmists, and the rest of us have a hunch we will get to France and be used.

Peggy is more of a joy every time I use her – if that is possible. I can't thank you enough for her, and can't imagine how I can ever go back to long hand again. Instead of making letter writing the bore it seems to be to the others, this takes no time at all, and I feel I can cover the ground so much faster. Hope you don't mind it.

Ruth Skinner has just come in. We all have the same tale to tell about the queer directions the bobbies give us as to where to take buses. It always seems to be "at the top of the street" which means nothing at all to any of us. Finally today I asked the bobbie just what that meant, and he said it means at the top of the street where there's a church and the traffic all goes one way motioning to the left. But the next time someone tells you "the top of the street" there's no church and no particular kind of traffic, and how is one to know? Another thing that is bothering us is if we have such trouble understanding "English as she is pronounced" (not Chaucer's English but G.V. Rex's), what are we going to make out of French??

It rather floors me sometimes when I think of it, so then I change the subject. You can see, though, what little sightseeing we've been doing and what a blissful time I've had just roaming about. I rather feel as though I had done my duty before in seeing the crown jewels and all the rest, so now I can really enjoy London. Besides, if you would go, as Prud did, to Westminster Abbey to try to get a "perfect moment" only to have it broken by a leader of some of our Marines saying, "it's time for the gang to move on" what's the use? Prud decided after all that the crypt as we saw it last evening at dusk was worth all that she saw in a streak of conscience today and then more.

There are lots of things I'd like to buy you all for Christmas, but they say duties on woolens are 60% and I don't know what not. The stores look anything but poverty stricken and the only thing we can't buy seems to be bars of sweet chocolate. They are not to be had, but candy is abundant – of a kind. It doesn't seem possible that Christmas comes this month. We are going around without overcoats and sitting with the French windows open, and as I said, the grass everywhere is green. I suppose you are having snow and winter by now.

LONDON – Friday, December 6, 1918

Just a line. Most of us are still here! Four went on by special pull among them our group leader. I am left in charge. I'm sorry to say, as it's not enviable

job. I will stick to the rest if I can, and it may mean their getting there and my being sent back. Such is life. I should manifest concern. (Boston version).

An unsettled day all round. We waited in a long queue to see or rather board the Deutschland. When almost there was told it "closed for lunch" and to return at 1:30. Impossible. Got a glimpse of it through a grill, but did not see the mystery ship. Heavy yellow, dirty London fog all day. Four went on, 13 stayed. Then up to headquarters. No information given out. There is such a jam at all hotels that it is holding up our going. Some say we'll be needed to follow up the Army of Occupation; others say we'll return to the U.S. at once. No possibility of getting our release here even should we wish. Some would like a civilian job rather than return to the States. All in the air and we on pins and needles. Glad of a late sleep over this morning as tomorrow I must get up to headquarters early for further orders. You can't imagine what a pawn one feels like and how disgusted we are that having applied months ago we seem too late. Just a note but that's all day has been. We may get to a service yet at Westminster!

LONDON – Tuesday, Dec. 10, 1918

Well!!! If you could tell us what is to happen next, we'd be obliged. Yesterday morning we reported at headquarters, and Mr. Gibson gave us a talk along the lines of the enclosed circular. Naturally we are disappointed and all at sea. He tried to make us feel that we had rendered our service when we had signed up to come over and that at that time there was a tremendous need of workers also that no one could have foretold the rapid demobilization since the Armistice was signed. The problem seems to be to give the 7,000 enough work to do while they are waiting sailings from France and there is some arrangement with Great Britain whereby those workers cannot come to England to sail as they would block the traffic. It is hard to get accommodations on the boats as they are being used as returning transports. He practically put it to up to us to return home, showing that we were really rendering the Red Cross service in doing so.

A number seem intent to get to France at all costs; some others of us feel that we signed up to help and that if we are not wanted and can help most by putting our tails behind us and coming home, it's up to us to do that, much as we hate to apparently "give up." Of course, we are not to be pitied a tenth as much as lots of men in the army who never got there either and who gave up their jobs and everything to get into it. So we signed up for America, Prud and I, with the privilege of changing if the Vassar unit cables for us to continue to France. We are really under their orders and have no option, so wired them yesterday stating the situation and asking what we should do. If they have definite work for us, well and good, but we don't want "make work" nor do we want to be dregs on the

market as we are here.

After all this upheaval yesterday morning, we went to three different departs of the American Red Cross here asking to be put to work at anything. They told us there was absolutely nothing that they could give us, that they had hardly enough work for their own staff and personnel and that the hospitals were emptying so rapidly there was no work for us there. To say that we felt de trop would be putting it mildly.

Then we got back to the hotel and an English girl, a Miss Grieve, a friend of one of our number whose motto seems to be "France or bust," got to talking with me and I asked her if she knew a small place where we could go to while waiting to get bookings home for the chances are that none will be available until after Christmas. She suggested Bournemouth and said she knew ladies who kept a lodging house there to which one had to have introductions, but that she would gladly supply them. Then she suggested that Prud and I visit her family. Her father died in America very suddenly of the flu on his way to India – just recently – and she and her mother and small brother and sister live at Beckenham. We said it was an imposition etc. but she insisted and said it would do her mother good and that she really wanted us. We were most reluctant to impose, but she told us to let her know our plans anyway, after we got the cable.

Then this morning, we got another message from her, urging our coming and saying that if we wanted to we could go to their hospital as V.A.Ds. while waiting, that they were short handed and would be glad of us. Well, I jumped about 10 feet at the chance – to think of being needed!! We would stay with her a day or two, and then live at the hospital. Prud is up at headquarters now seeing if they have any objections. I can't see why they should, as it would seem reasonable to suppose they would rather have us doing something, than support us here doing nothing. So I'm hoping that we can go and stay there as long as we are wanted, unless we should have a cable to go to France.

In the afternoon I wandered off by myself to see the "Sea Power" exhibition. I just wished Bill had been along every minute. There were pictures painted during the war of H.M. ships in action – all kinds of ships, flying craft to convoys and I don't know what not, interiors, exteriors, everything you could imagine. And some of them were most remarkable. There were also some very good portraits of naval officers. Then there were war trophies, wreckage from German ships, etc. galore. But the most interesting of all to me were the models of "dazzle" painting (English for camouflage) and model of Zeebrugge harbor and the attempt to bottle it. There were little wooden models of all sorts of boat, the Leviathan down to Q boats and model in all stages of being dazzled. It seems to be a regular science, the object of which is not to conceal the vessel, as that has been found impossible to do, but to confuse another boat as to its relative

position and direction.

What do you think??? Prud has just phoned from headquarters that they have had a wire saying for us to go on to France!!! That there is work for the Vassar unit!!! Well virtue sometimes has its reward after all. And now I must stop and type a lot of lists and reports, as six of us go today and four of us, including ourselves, go tomorrow. Hurray. Love, RC

Later: The others are off. Tonight we go the YM Eagle Hut to do canteen work as they are short of helpers. We stay all night if needed; otherwise, we'll come home at 1 a.m. Another job – we're pleased as Punch. By the way, the nice Julia Stamm and Mrs. Nease who were on the Melita with us, have at last come down from Liverpool, and have the room right next to ours. It's great to get to see them again. They go to France on Friday.

Still later, waiting to go to the Eagle Hut:

After getting all the papers and reports out this morning and having lunch, we toted some empty suitcases up to Grey's Inn Road where our trunks are in storage at Hearn's -- such a funny, cluttered dingy old office. Finally we were led out through the pouring rain, through the stable yard to some sheds and there as best as we could we fished some more clothing out of our trunks, packed it up and returned also in the rain. It has been a queer day all day, first near sunlight, then sudden darkening and rain, which invariable caught us so that we are a little damper than ever. After leaving our duds here we started out again to the French passport office, luckily nearby where we had to have our passports viséd again to come within the time limit It gets me "scareder and scareder" the nearer I get to France and it seems such years that I was trying to chat with Mlle Petit, that I know I have forgotten even the little I tried to put into my head those good evenings that I stuffed it so. And somehow one hasn't the ambition to pull out Godell and study, even though one has the time.

What do you think – we had tea with sugar today! That may not sound much to you but after fooling yourself into thinking you like your drinks just as well entirely unsweetened, or trying to pretend that saxin is a substitute only in name, it tasted pretty good to get the real article again. LA had some in her trunk and she got it out this p.m. I have sent your box of candy, Daddy, to Miss Greive and knew you wouldn't mind. When we thought we were going there I mentioned having some, and said I would bring it along and she said "oh, good" in restrained fashion, which you knew meant she hadn't seen any decent candy in four years. So I sent it along as the only way I could think of adequately thanking her for her cordiality, which meant such a lot to us. Except that I didn't like to give your candy away, I know they'll appreciate it even more than I, and I

still have some other candy left to share in France.

I am going to try to find time to write Mary tomorrow, but should we sleep so late that I don't get a chance, tell her I thought of her and Billy especially. I'll celebrate the day (U.S. time) by sleeping on a saloon transom whatever that may mean of a channel steamer or if we don't freeze on deck. Cabins they say are out of the question. And as to where we will lay our heads in France, the report is that Paris is full to the roof and that beds are put up in the hotel corridors and in now unused surgical dressing rooms. We even expect to be farmed out in villages while awaiting orders. But then this is all rumor. Things may turn out quite differently. We live from moment to moment these days. What discourages us is the rumor that the mail is so tremendous at headquarters that nobody gets any but by chance. And we had counted on that.

This time it's a final good night. RC

LONDON (Thackery Hotel) – Wednesday, December 11, 1918

Dearest Mary,

You are probably just coming down to breakfast, so my greetings to you and Billy are in pretty good season after all. I wish I had something besides my love to send you, but that may get through quicker and more surely than anything else. And I send you both just loads of that, you know.

We are turned out of our rooms but are still camping in them waiting for the Red Cross van to come along and pick us and our luggage up and take us to the station. They seem to want us to be there in ample time and have allowed only an hour and three quarters!! Still, we might as well camp there as here, and perhaps I can get some of my English money changed back again into French. As I wrote, we went to the Eagle Hut last night and worked hard from 10:30 til 1:15. I wish I could adequately describe it, but it is hopeless to try. The place was more like an Inside Inn than anything else I've seen since – everything labeled, instructions hollered through megaphones every so often, clatter and crash of dishes, and noise of entertainments going on in various alcove places. The air was thick with smoke and the smell of food, the floors were wet and slippery, and the place was packed with soldiers and sailors from everywhere, though our own sailors prevailed ten to one at least. We took off our coats and hats, put on a none-too clean overall apron and fell to. My first job was to clear tables, and why I didn't slip and fall with those trays is still a mystery to me. Poor R.S. did and smashed a whole trayful of dishes, but no one seemed to mind!!

Then I went to the "swill job" (sweet name), where, as you can perhaps guess, we scraped plates; then to dishwashing until the regular old dame came. I didn't start out being too particular, as I was advised that haste was the chief requisite, but as time went on and the incoming dishes swamped me, I got even swifter with what result you can imagine. When the regular one came, no nonsense from her. She literally poured the trays into the sink (and nothing seemed inclined to break), made a few motions under water with her dishcloth and behold, the dishes were washed and put on the drain where I slicked off the surplus water with a very wet towel. Well, it was like one of those nightmares you sometimes have when you try for an eternity to catch up with yourself and never can. The cafeteria closed at 12, so by 12:30 we were pretty well cleaned up, and I was put on the silver shift. It seemed absurd to apply silver polish and rub up those nickel forks and spoons when the washing was so sketchy, but it means that they are at least clean once a day and those who are served when the thing opens again at 3:30 have the best of it. Then at 1:15 we came back to the hotel and crawled into bed and stayed there until good and late this morning.

Then packing, and now the Channel, whatever that may mean. Love to you all, R.C.

LE HAVRE – Thursday, December 12, 1918

No chance for Peggy now! We're huddled into the lounging room of this hotel same rate as Compton) waiting once more to move on, and I hate to let the chance to get off a line go by. I'm afraid I've flooded you with letters so far, but later on I may not get such good chances to write.

You should have seen the four of us yesterday with our luggage, crammed into a khaki-colored US officers car and escorted to the station by the least polite Red Cross official we've come up against. We started so outrageously early that of course we waited hours at the station, but at last got aboard. This time a first class coach as we were booked all the way through Le Havre from Southampton. We four had a compartment all to ourselves and dozed or munched as the spirit moved us. Not having had meat cards in London we found our last lunch of cauliflower au gratin a very sketchy substitute. We were met again at Southampton and in company with another Red Cross special group of blind workers – 17 in all- we went through the motions of showing our passports and got aboard the ship. It's the smallest ship on the line and we thought people would never stop getting on. We stood in line sometime to get dinner, as only one or two were let in at one time, when others had finished. We were told no men could have cabins and as for ourselves our first class tickets were futile as we were allowed to bunk 8 into a small second- class

four-person cabin. I gave one look at the width of the bunk and chose a night on deck. Louise Alden, ditto. We piled on everything we possessed until I could hardly bend my arms, much less myself, then crawled into our sleeping bags and put shawls and coats over us. We were fortunate enough to secure a bench to ourselves, one of those narrow curved in affairs – which was all that saved us from lurching out. It got quite hard before morning, but we were pretty comfortable on the whole and much better off than we would have been downstairs which was below water level and hence airless. We got plenty of air rushing by and there was quite a bit of it in the middle of the night. We got up at about 6:30 to see all the scores of boats around us, some anchored for the night and others bound for every point of the compass. It was quite a sight. Then we breakfasted and went on deck again while we came into the harbor and landed. After that we toiled over getting our rugs and stuff back into our rolls. We tried to do it in shifts, but the time grew short and in the heat of the lowest deck, in a two by four cabin, or falling over each other in a narrow aisle we stuffed our things in shape somehow or other and disembarked. The next thing we knew, we with our baggage were climbing into an army truck and off we rattled to the hotel.

Of course, it started raining about then, but we paddled out just the same. I can't tell you just where we went because I haven't the least idea, but we saw a gang of German prisoners marching along in front of a small youthful French soldier, and we saw some barracks to which some French soldiers ex-prisoners were returning. We also talked with one soldier, a prisoner in Germany since the very beginning of the war. It is so queer to see the horizon-blue uniforms, familiar enough in pictures come to life. It's just that all the time everything seems to be a living picture, rather than the reality. And then to cap it all, we went through an open flower market where there's holly and mistletoe as well as flowers for sale. Some of the girls are trying to send some holly home in very frail baskets, but I can't see it getting safely further than New York without being completely crushed and annihilated.

I do hope that tomorrow may bring me some mail. Even though it's old news, I do so want to hear how you all are. It seems such ages since I knew.

Goodbye and much love to all. RC

PARIS – Friday, December 13, 1918

We are temporarily living at a now practically evacuated Red Cross hospital near Paris. Paris is some 6,000 beds short, and people are even sleeping on floors of hotels and worse. We saw one girl's room this evening, and we are pretty grateful to be out here even if it means commuting. Five of us have hospital cots end to end in a narrow corridor on the top floor, but everything

is clean and shipshape and even if we must live literally in a suitcase (with no bureau or table space of any kind), I for one prefer it to a sixteenth century hotel with its three in a single room and its other drawbacks. And here there are three good American tubs, while one can only get a tub twice a week and 3 francs each at that in some of the hotels.

We got here at midnight last night. We left the Tortoni in Havre as we had arrived, in a truck and got to the station so much on time that we had just one hour to wait in the coach before the train started. Such rain and such mud and such dampness and such dirtiness of baggage when we had to handle it to identify it. Two nurses were with us in the compartment and eleven others were on the same train and our luggage all piled in the corridor. Locomotion inside was not easy but it was even worse outside. We had to get out as there was no vestibule into the next car when the train stopped in the open country and run along beside it to get to the dining car and once there we had to wait until another stop at Rouen to get back in again. Some system. But that was nothing to what others went through the evening before. There had been a wreck on the track and it delayed them so that at about midnight they had to all pile out and carry their luggage the length of the train and then through a long dark tunnel. It's all one can do to stagger a few feet with our suitcases and rolls, and usually we don't have to do more. They said they stumbled about both because of the load and the pitch darkness, and felt more or less like refugees themselves. Then they didn't land in Paris till late the next morning. We got in about 11 p.m. and after much commotion from four new members of the group, each of whom took it upon herself to boss the crowd, though a lieutenant was there for that purpose, we were bundled into another truck, fifteen of us, this time with the caravan top up. We rode and rode, peering out from the depths of darkness inside to the hardly less dark outside, listening to some French people getting a lift jabber their lingo and listening to another French woman tell in English how Paris celebrated November 11th by turning out in the streets and falling upon each others' necks. By the time we got here you can imagine how good bed looked to us and after creeping upstairs so as not to disturb the few convalescents on the floors below, we tumbled into bed.

The superintendent was a peach and didn't turn us out for breakfast this morning, but let us sleep and then gave us a breakfast here that we did full justice to, oatmeal and sugar and milk and bread and fresh butter and coffee, all we could eat and maybe it didn't taste good! After that we found our way via trams and metros to headquarters, and by the way the address is 2 Place de Rivoli. We were cordially welcomed much to my surprise. It seems college graduates are given preference as they seem to have displayed more use of their "beans." So there may be a chance for us to skate in as grads and

get a job. After filling out more papers and giving your birthplace, birthdate, Daddy, for the thousandth time (and for goodness knows what) we were herded to the prefect police to have our passports scanned and to get new papers in consideration of some five photographs which we donated to the rogues gallery of Paris. Then to lunch at a small Red Cross canteen, where we got delicious food very reasonable. Afterwards we did a few errands on the Rue de Rivoli, such as getting eye glasses tightened so they wouldn't altogether fall apart, getting a wrist chain for our so-called death tags and getting a map of Paris. Now I'm happy for I know the general lay of the land and can get about without feeling lost. This morning the only familiar object was the Madeline and everything seemed out of place and unfamiliar. I don't seem to remember as much of it as I did of London, But the event of the afternoon was getting bread and sugar tickets. The usual vagueness of directions sent me here and there and everywhere but the right place and some sent me back to where I had been more than once. Finally I found the funny little out of the way court where the mairie is located and in the depths of that was the spot I was after. It was too small to be on my map. In hunting up some Vassar people and other references at headquarters about the first person I ran into was Mrs. Olds and maybe it didn't look good to see her. Betty Ames has been doing nursing and is now taking a three-weeks rest. At 5 we were given a speech of welcome, a matter of form, and then had tea at headquarters, sort of a reception. We lost RS for a time as she was invited to dine out, and we had dinner at the first mentioned hotel with a very talkative fellow passenger of Melita, who hadn't seen a familiar face for days and apparently let off steam on us.

We saw one unit member, Ruth Crippen, who is doing social work at some dispensary here. The rest of the members are pretty much scattered. We went to get our red work cards for a week or so, so won't know until then just where we will be assigned but can do miscellaneous work in Paris until that time. Everything to do with our work still seems to be in a state of flux and uncertainty and rumors are most contradictory and of course undependable. Everything is closed tomorrow in honor of Wilson and our mail won't be sorted until Monday as we have only just registered being in Paris. So I'm hoping for a letter Monday p.m. Must stop for tonight. Up early tomorrow. Love to all, RC

French National Holiday for Wilson

PARIS – Saturday, December 14, 1918

Such a day! And such mobs and enthusiasm! And how grateful we are that we weren't cooling our heels in London. You will read all about it in the paper even the Dispatch, and I'm going to send you a paper from here when I

can get one off but you may want a word or two about it all besides.

After an early breakfast we tried to hurry into town, couldn't get onto a tram, so walked miles along Rue de Neuilly toward the metro. And such heat! It was like a spring day at home. Finally we got in town and joined other Red Cross personnel at the arch in the Jardin des Tuileries and after waiting quite some time, we marched en masse to Rond Point in front of the Beaux Arts, crossing Concord bridge (as I call it to Prud's disgust) and recrossing again on the Invalides. The streets were lined with soldiers in horizon blue, guns stacked and munching crusts of something. In other places the cavalry had dismounted and were waiting about on the line of the march, and behind them were mobs on the sidewalks and sticking out over window ledges and even perched on top of buildings and the heads of statues and on the guns in the Place de la Concorde. It was a great sight. Perhaps you will see a movie of it, for the man was much in evidence. When we finally got to our places, more cavalry were stationed opposite and with their red and white pennants on long poles, looked extremely medieval. And the horses looked medieval too and tired enough to have lived then. The men were rather somber and almost all of them wore croix de guerre, some with five or six stars and an occasional palm. It looked as though every Frenchman had been a hero, and I can't imagine how even the iron cross could be more numerous. As we stood waiting we could look in four directions and catch glimpses of troops marching or riding to position, just visible over the top of the crowds. As we watched the police with great manner and many badges, stroll here and there with vast importance. A few airplanes were flying quite low over us, when suddenly we heard the boom of a gun, the presidential salute, which meant Wilson had arrived. Not so very long after that we caught the ripple of a cheer in the distance, which swelled and swelled and by the time the carriage came near, there was a great uproar. I was near the front and could seem them all personally, even catching Wilson's eye, I'm sure! I had only about time to get a good look at one person in each carriage as they went past and saw more of Margaret Wilson in #2 than Mrs. W or Monsieur and Madame Pointcare. Then I saw Clemenceau and Lansing and Pershing, and I wish you could have heard the cheering for him. We were disappointed that there was no parade of troops as we had heard that crack regiments would be reviewed but after the celebrities passed everything broke up and we wandered with the crowd down the Champs Elysée. Even that was a separate thrill in itself and squads of troops, some with bugles a few with bands would pass. Everywhere on the horizon blue against the drab background of the mob. We lingered around the Place de la Concorde for a time watching some bare-kneed, aproned French boys play about the captured canon, rather a novel toy, when unloaded.

Of course all the stores were closed for the day, and all day there was a holiday crowd thronging the streets. I happened upon Margaret MacLaren at headquarters and she went with us all to lunch at Tipperary Inn, good food, but quite steep. Then she left us and we continued strolling. I couldn't remember the name of the hotel we stayed at, but suddenly things began to look very natural, and I looked up where I thought the hotel might be and there sure enough was Hotel Scribe, so my memory hasn't failed altogether. We kept on to the Notre Dame and watched men pick and shovel the sand bags away from the entrance. We had to go through a sort of subterranean passage at one side to get into the cathedral, and then it was very dark and very damp. And the stillness of it was broken both by Yankyism from sight-seeing doughboys and by the lugubrious voice of a woman asking for money for "les pauvres" at the same time she rattled her money bag. So I left and went down to the further bridge, which gives the nicest view of all of the cathedral to my mind with the flying buttresses. We agreed upon a spot to meet but could not find RS. Failing to find her there or at headquarters we went off to dinner and had quite a lark. Then Prud and Louise stayed in to see the Red Cross dance, and I came on out here, and now RS has turned up, and this will be the end of my letter, as it is impossible to continue without too many interruptions.

So good night and much love to all. When I get a letter from you it will give me something to talk about beside my own affairs. I don't feel that I have half described the day to you. As Prud says think of telling your grandnieces that you were in Paris the day Wilson made his triumphal entry. Everyone here without exception is glad he has come and thinks him about the most remarkable man, at least in our history. I wish their enthusiasm would get across the pond, but you can imagine how it tickles us.

Goodnight for good this time. RC

PARIS – Sunday, December 15, 1918

Evening again, and pretty nearly ready to turn in. We wanted to sleep over this morning but our fifth member doesn't get up quietly but talks to herself and even to us though we tell her beforehand we want no breakfast. So by nine thirty we were left no choice but to get up. As we haven't been able to get to our trunks again or to get laundry done we were forced to spend another domestic morning and with hard water and few conveniences for laundering, it takes great patience to get our clothes passing clean!

We had no more than finished than it was time to go into town for lunch. "Sammies" was recommended to us but we have discovered that Sammy rhymes with "jamais" as far as we are concerned. To put it mildly, it was none too good,

nor "propre."

Then Prud and I had a date with Ruth Crippen at the Arche de Triomphe, and from there we taxied into the Bois to within walking distance of a hospital we wanted to visit. But the hospital had been evacuated last week. It gave us an idea however of a large tent hospital and of the quarters we will have if we do hospital hut work. Our chief concern was in pumping Ruth Crippen about the affairs in the unit and the prospects ahead of it. She split off to do social work (so-called) here in Paris, instead of the military work which the unit in the crisis was asked to do. But her description of her work sounds simply like giving out relief to refugees here and doesn't interest us as we hear more about it. We think we could do more worthwhile work in another line, and tomorrow will see as many people in charge of different branches of work at headquarters as we can.

She took us to tea at her apartment on Rue des Martyrs, after losing us and herself more than once. Mme Claisse was awfully nice, and we actually talked in French all the time we were there. Prud is a hummer at it, while you can still hear the wheels go around when I try to talk, but I will say I'm no worse than Ruth Crippen and was surprised that after being here since September, she talked no more fluently than she does. We were about dead tired by this time so the tea just went to the spot. Madame Claisse talked about the political situation and the relationship between France and America. She reiterated the regard the French have for Wilson, both as a man and a diplomatist and as the representative of the U.S. Before the war she had regularly an average of 18 American pupils all the time. Of course the war knocked her profession out. It made me wish that I had the address of the one with whom Lucia and Martha stayed. In case we were assigned to work in Paris, she might take an interest in us and perhaps suggest an apartment we could rent. Prices are frightfully high here, and we are wondering how we are going to make our 20 francs a day do, but fully expect to somehow. Prices are lower outside Paris.

Love to all RC

PARIS – Tuesday, December 24, 1918

Dear dear Mr. Cutler and dear dear Amelia,

It seems so long since I sent you the cable this morning, through Mr. Olds, telling you that Rufus had left us, and yet I can hardly realize that you still do not know anything about it. I have been living these last few days for you just as hard as I could. I mean I have been trying to do for Ruth what you would have done and to be to her a little bit of what you would have been, and it doesn't

seem as if you had been very far away, and now I want more than anything to tell you every bit of it all so that you can see it a little as you are yearning to.

I like to think that about a week from now you will get a happy letter from her telling you all about our job at being sent on from England and how gaily we settled ourselves at the Hospital. I know she wrote you on Sunday the 15th and it was only the next day that she was taken sick. She had had a little cold for some time but had not thought much about it. Though she had not neglected to take care of herself. She had a little sore throat on the steamer but cured it by gargling. It was in England that she began having a cough. It only bothered her a little at night and then only because she was afraid of keeping us awake. I remember asking why she didn't get some medicine for it, and she said she did not know what would be the thing and you had always advised her against buying medicines without a doctor's orders, and she did not think it anything to see a doctor about – it really was very light. But the English climate was very damp, and we sort of took it for granted that getting to dryer France would make it all right. I don't think you would have thought very much of it yourself, and she was in such good sprits and so full of energy in every way.

It wasn't till Monday, the 16th that she seemed ill. That morning she said she had a headache but felt all right otherwise and she kept her appointment at headquarters. Then she looked pale and I helped her get home out to the hospital where she lay down. Later in the afternoon, she seemed feverish and we immediately got her down stairs in the hospital proper under the care of the doctors, all within a few hours of the time she first seemed sick. I am telling you all this hoping that you will find it some comfort to think that she had good care from the start.

For several days she seemed about the same, feverish but very much interested in all the reports of our assignment that I brought her morning and night. They said on Wednesday or Thursday that the diagnosis was influenza, but it was not until Friday that the doctor told me it was pneumonia and not till Sunday that we realized how very serious it was. He told me then that both lungs were involved and that she was very sick.

Before that, on Saturday, we knew it was lobar pneumonia in one lung. That night Rufus herself asked me to get a homeopathic doctor through Mr. Olds, if possible. The hospital doctor, a Red Cross physician, Dr. Lasher, was very willing to consult with anyone who might be suggested, and I do want you to know that there was nothing they did not do for her – a room where she had constant fresh air and a nurse to herself day and night. I talked with Mrs. Olds about a doctor but she knew of no homeopath so I went that same night to Dr. Livingston Farrand, the head of the Rockefeller Commission for Tuberculosis to whom I had a letter of introduction from my uncle who is a doctor. He was very

kind and arranged to send out a doctor the very next day. He knew, of course, all the leading American doctors over here, Army, Red Cross, or Rockefeller, and particularly the chest experts, but he said it would be impossible to locate a homeopath before Tuesday as he knew of none and would have to make considerable inquiries. The hospital doctor and I both felt that in the meantime we should have any expert even if not a homeopath, and Sunday Dr. Farrand came out himself and brought Dr. Wyatt, a New York specialist, who is the medical head of the Rockefeller Commission, the very best there is in the whole city of Paris. He was splendid and it was so reassuring to have him say that the attending doctors were doing everything that could be done. He also explained to me that the two schools do not differ very much in the essential of the treatment of this particular trouble. Ruth took it for granted that he was a homeopath and we simply did not disillusion her. Dr. Farrand continued his efforts to find one, but in vain, and I do hope you will feel that Dr. Wyatt was adequate. I am sure if you had been there he would have filled you with the same courage and hope that he did me.

As I said in my cable I was able to be with Ruth almost all the time. And I'm so glad I could. The matron arranged for me to have all my meals at the nurses home and from Sunday noon, I was in her room most of the time except for meals and a little exercise and sleep. So I know just how hard the nurses worked, they were both so skillful and so tireless working almost every moment either with medicines or with little attentions to make her more comfortable. The day nurse was particularly lovely and very devoted. It is her picture I am enclosing. I asked her for it for you because I want so much that you should see that she is the sort of person who would give Ruth more than her professional best. She really loved her, and I know Rufus felt confidence in her and was fond of her, she smiled so gratefully and once – Sunday afternoon – she roused herself to whisper, "Thank you – for all you have done for me today." I have written Mrs. Perry's name and address on the back as I told her just so that she can seem real to you. I know you would have felt the comfort of her as I did. She kissed me when I said goodbye to her today with tears in her eyes and she seemed so really motherly (she is old enough to be our mother), and I know she comforted Rufus.

Sunday morning was the time when we were to know something definite and the doctors all advised my waiting till then to cable you. I do hope that was right. It was so hard to know whether the shock or the long hours of waiting would be easier for you, because you see that the cables are still so congested that even over the special Red Cross wires it takes four days, and I knew you would not be able possibly to get an answer back in time. So I could only try to use my very best judgment and if I was wrong it was only because the

responsibility was too much and I hope you will understand. If I could only talk to you it would be such a comfort to me, and I hope it would to you but this is the quickest way to reach you.

Monday morning it hardly seemed as if she could live through the morning, but she rallied a little toward noon and it was not till evening that she began to sink rapidly. She was conscious most of the time till the last but not enough to say anything very plainly, so that she did not leave you any message. At one time she seemed a little troubled and tried to say, "No hope" but I sat beside her and talked to her about our plans for work here, and I think it calmed her. I asked her if she wasn't trying to say "Yo ho" which was a cheer we had at college, just to try to get the other idea out of her head, she repeated, "Yo ho" several times to prove to herself that she could. I held her hand up until the very last and my greatest comfort now is that I always had a smile for her, and she never knew how anxious we were. And she said, "Prudy, you're such a comfort," and I think it really made it a little easier having me. And for me it meant so much to be able to stand a little and help just a little. She would have done the same for me as I told her when she asked if it wasn't awfully stupid for me, just sitting there. Another time she said, "I wish I weren't such a fool" meaning so weak, you know and I said, "You're not a fool," and she said, "Yes, I am" and I said "Well, then you are one of the best little fools we've ever seen" at which she smiled (because that's one of our favorite expressions, you know.) Another time she wandered a little and said something about "troop ships are funny, too" but mostly she was just drowsy and then was very peaceful.

The doctor and two nurses were with us at the end, which was a little before midnight. It was a beautiful clear night with stars and a moon and when it was all over I stepped to the window and said a little prayer, though really these last two days have been one long prayer. I hope you will think I did right about not letting a Red Cross chaplain who called see her. I knew it would only alarm her, and besides I couldn't admit till the end that anything of that sort was needed. I just had to insist to myself that she was going to get well so that she would feel it too. I do hope you feel that was best, and I believe you do. I crept away afterwards but sent down from our room upstairs by one of the nurses the little photograph of her mother that was in her suitcase. I just liked to feel they are together. That is why you will not find it in her things when they come home.

SAVENAY, FRANCE (Base Hospital #8) – January 2, 1919

Dear Mr. Cutler,

I don't need to tell you, do I , how much I have been thinking of you and Amelia since I wrote you last Friday, first wondering if you had yet gotten my messages and the wishing I might talk with you or do anything to make it easier for you. And in all the things I did and arrangements I made before I left Paris I kept hoping I was doing what you would want or what you would have done yourselves if you had been there.

I had to close my letter on Friday noon in order to have it catch the American Mail, so I could only tell you of our plans for the little service at the American Church. It was as simple as Rufus would have liked, just some of the most beautiful readings from the Bible and then a very comforting prayer. I had talked a little with Dr. Goodrich, the minister, and he seemed to have understood the spirit of service with which Rufus lived her whole life – and gave it up . There was a very lovely poem he read, too, about a ship sailing down a river and out on the full tide, which she would have loved. Then the organ played "Peace," a lovely chant we had at college, and that meant a great deal to all of us who knew it. The flag over her was almost hidden with the flowers sent by the people who knew us on the steamer and a very beautiful spray from the Red Cross. After the service Lieutenant Caldwell took a few of the flowers, and they are already on their way to you. I was not able to learn definitely about who sent the flowers, but I know you would have been impressed with the number of new friends Ruth had made. They showed me, too, the little chapel where she will be resting under the flag till we know your wishes, a very quiet and beautiful little place. I went back to the church for Sunday morning services, and it was strangely comforting to have them sing just the hymns that had been in my mind all that week. They were "Oh, God, Our Help in Ages Past" and "How Firm a Foundation" of which I had been saying to myself the verse that begins "Fear not I am with thee, oh be not dismayed" and that other lovely one "Lord of All Beings, Throned Afar" with the verse that begins "Grant us the truth to make us free." They all made her seem so near.

I hope that before this reaches you, you will have seen Miss Virginia Rice who is sailing for home within a week. I had a long talk with her on Saturday and only wished I had known her before. I told her most of the things that I put into my letter, so that if that was delayed you could know them through her. Also I arranged to send home by her all of Ruth's more personal things, such as the letters she had received, those she had read and those that came too late, money and account books, keys, etc. I also put in one or two notices that came to me, thinking you might be interested.

The last day I was in Paris I located the trunk at the storehouse to be sure it was all right and to take out a few things sent to the unit by the Vassar committee. I also took out some candy. Ruth saved almost all her steamer candy because she thought it would mean so much to the boys in the hospital, and I knew she would want it to reach them. That made room enough for me to pack her Corona in the trunk where it seemed safer than going any other way. I do hope you will think that was right.

I do hope you will write to me before very long to be sure I have not forgotten anything you should be told, and I hope you will tell me what you want done. Probably the Red Cross has told you of the alternatives interment in the little cemetery near Paris or the possibilities of transportation to America. Do please let me know when you decide what you prefer and let me help carry out any plan you settle on. One reason why I am staying and working is that I want to do everything you want done at this end, and I do so hope you will let me. I can't bear to think of anyone else doing any of these things that are serving you and her. I am jealous of that privilege, so do let me. If you want her brought home I shall arrange to do so at once, you know I could not bear to think of any less tender escort, and I would be so grateful.

I don't need to tell you how much I, too, miss her. Every day brings its fresh sense of loss, the contrast of all our plans with the present emptiness, and I have to get used to it all over again every day. I know, too, that for you it is the same effort every day to realize it, and I only wish there were some way I could make it easier for you.

This brings you a great deal of love. Sincerely, Elinor Prudden

SAVENAY, FRANCE (Base Hospital #8) – January 21, 1919

Dear dear Amelia,

Mother has sent me a copy of your wire asking her for a copy of your cablegram, so I have some little idea of when my message reached you, and I think each day that by now surely you must have gotten my letter. I long to know if the cables came in the order they were sent and how you all are. I do hope you have somehow know how constantly I have thought of you during these long weeks of waiting that are so hard. Really you have been in my mind and in my heart almost as much as Rufus herself. I would only make it harder for you if I told you how much I miss her how lonely work is and how lonelier still to come to my little room in the village – she would have loved it all so.

One thing I have realized since I heard from Mother yesterday that my cable to her came right after my letter from London saying we might not be needed over there and that was that you may feel our coming was unnecessary and that your sacrifice was all for a terrible mistake. But I assure you with the utmost sincerity that that is not so, while we were being talked to in London about volunteering to go home the head of this department was frantic for workers and even now, after someone else was sent down with me, we still are asking for two more workers. We all work about 11 or 12 hours a day just as hard as we possibly can and still feel that we hardly meet the most urgent needs.

And it is all work that Rufus would have loved and would have done so beautifully. She would have found here a field for every bit of that wonderful spirit of service that she showed every day of her life and for all those gifts that made her take so naturally to caring for sick people and for all her executive ability. I keep thinking how she would have worked. Just let me give you a little idea of what it is like. Each of us has 12-15 wards in this big center, which includes besides Base 8, about five other base hospitals. That means we have 400 -450 bed patients for they are the ones we pay most attention to, those who are up can get to the Recreation Ht to make their wants known. We visit these boys as often as we can and you can easily see it is not half often enough when the barracks are so desolate and some of them have been in bed so long and some are so terribly crippled and early all are so uncomfortable. We try to cheer them up, see that they have everything that the Red Cross can do to make them comfortable and that alone would take all our time. But we are called the Home Communication Service and our chief business is to see that the families at home hear from the boys or about them. Sometimes that means writing letters for those that have lost an arm or that are still flat on their backs or too weak to hold a pencil, sometimes it means trying to trace mail for a boy who hasn't heard from home for a long time. And it means, too, writing to the families of the boys who die telling them all the things they want so much to know. And I want you to know that you have been in my mind so much ever since I got here and I have thought so much of what you must be wanting to know, that that part of the work has been the greatest satisfaction to me. I feel the needs of all those anxious and sad families at home even more than the needs of the boys themselves, and I assure you that they, the boys are beyond words in need.

BASE HOSPITAL, SAVENAY, FRANCE - Feb. 12, 1919

Dear, dear Amelia,

Your letter in answer to my first came yesterday, and I can't tell you how glad I was to get it. I had been longing so anxiously for news of you all ever since

your other came with the news that my first cable never arrived till three days after the second it seemed as if I could not wait. How unthinkable cruel to get such a message right in the midst of her vigorous letters! My heart aches when I think of it and I feel as if I had done something terrible without giving anesthetic to it, and it was all my fault not to have sent the first earlier and I hope you have forgiven me. It was so hard to know – and so sudden—and I had hoped that if they arrived as planned you would have had warning with the minimum of anxiety and uncertainty added – oh, I'm so sorry I would have done anything in the world to spare you – and to think how it turned out!

You were good to write so comfortingly of what I did – but, oh, Amelia, I could have done so much more if I had had before the experience I am having now. I used to be so awkward in a sick room and so afraid of disturbing the sick person – and I remember how clumsy I was once when I tried to help Mrs. Perry turn Rufus' pillow. I think I know now how to do some of the soothing and comforting things that I had to let Mrs. Perry do for her – but sometimes one can do things for a stranger that one cannot do when one loves a person very dearly – don't you think so? And perhaps it is that experience that has taught me to be more helpful here. Everything I do I hope is making up for all I would have liked to do for her – and I am happiest when I am doing something for a very sick boy – I feel I am doing it in her name and for her.

I do not remember just what I wrote in my first letter but I don't want you to feel that she suffered much. She slept or dozed a great deal those last two days and was conscious for a few minutes in long intervals – so that if she knew she was going to leave us – and I never felt sure that she did – it was not for long – and I like to hope that she began looking ahead instead of back – I feel she must have sent you some message if it had been otherwise.

One thing I meant to tell you in one of my other letters and that was that when she was first taken sick – on about Thursday perhaps of that week – she wondered what she should do about writing you. She said she had promised to tell you so if she were ill and she wanted to keep her promise. But we figured that since the French and American mails went out on Thursday and Friday respectively, her letter of Sunday the 15th would not go out till then and she would be able to write better for the next mail.

I am very sure she knew all that you would have said before she left for she knew how you would miss her and realized so gratefully what it meant to you to make her going away so happy for she spoke of it to me. I know you were in her mind

constantly and that she loved to share it all with you as much as she could in her letters. And when I remember how, when we first talked of the plan in Chatham, her chief thought was for you and your father – I know what the leaving home meant to you both – and how much you put into those fall months!

I was half afraid you would hate me for having urged her to come, and just at first I hated myself till I remembered how, from the first suggestion she had kindled to the idea and how happy she had been in all the preparations and beginnings and I am sure she would rather have this final experience find her bound on just such a "great adventure" than in any other situation – aren't you?

That was a happy month, in spite of all the fears of being disappointed – my only regret was that we were not freer to be alone together – I felt almost envious of the way she spent herself so generously for all the others too. The few times we were alone together – nights in our stateroom and the precious evening when we prowled around quaint Liverpool streets in the fog for a few minutes before tea, stand out like jewels in my memory – and how we used to beam across the table on the steamer in sheer joy at being together and really on our way – really it would have repaid you for all it cost you to let her start.

I was so glad to hear what your father's decision was – I had not heard from Mr. Olds. I felt quite sure that would be what you would want. Did I tell you – or didn't I dare – that I knew that was what Rufus would want. It just happened that a day or two before she was taken sick we passed a church where one of those terrible French funerals was going on, and we spoke of how different it was from our idea and Rufus said then that she believed in cremation. I was so glad you wrote me all you did about your service in St. Paul and am anxiously awaiting the paper. It must have been very beautiful and just what she would have liked best. And I'm so glad to know about the will. She told me she had made one, but did not say what she had arranged and of course I did not ask. How proud Vassar will be and what lovelier plans could she have made than for the maids and the Mary Nourse fund. It sounds so exactly like her!

I want to tell you about the special boys I chose to give Rufus' candy to. One was a boy who had lost both legs and was the most wonderfully plucky boy I have ever known. When he could get a chance at the wheeled chair that has to do for two wards, he would wheel himself to the door and sit in the sunshine and smile and wave at us as we were going by. I took it to him one day when somebody else had the chair and he was stuck in bed and he was so pleased. I had found out that he had had no pay for months (and no mail) and couldn't buy

at the commissary or the canteen and was just aching for some chocolate candy. I did not tell him where it came from except that a friend of mind wanted it to reach a good soldier. Another box – of peppermints – with a postal on the outside of the Capitol in Minneapolis – I gave to a boy from North St. Paul. His name is Swanson – and he has lost a leg, too. He's such a nice fellow – comes from quite a religious family and asked me first of all to bring him a New Testament. That was how we first got acquainted and since then he has told me a good deal about his family – and my! How proud he is of his missionary sister in India. And I have taken him all the Dickens I could find – and we are pretty good friends. He was delighted with the candy – and with the box – and said it seemed good to get something from home!! And the last I gave to a boy named Doty – another who lost both legs and has been very depressed. I took it to him for a consolation prize the day a good many other patients in neighboring beds were going home and leaving him to get stronger before he goes, too. It was a very blue day for him – they are all so homesick – and I think it cheered him up. I told them all about the same thing.

Do you remember I wrote you about my hopes of getting some books or music for the bed patients in the spirit of doing for them some of what Rufus would have done. I have given that up because the American Library Association sent us down several thousand and the need is met. I haven't yet found anything to take the place of that plan – anything fitting and worthy – but I am still thinking about it.

Maybe I shall find the right thing in the future plans of the Vassar Unit. Have you heard that we are to leave here in a few weeks to do reconstruction in the devastated regions under the French government. That is as far as we know now – none of the details have been worked out yet – not even the district we would take – but it is likely to be just the sort of work we had in mind when we first signed up. I am glad for that reason but it will be even harder to do that that we planned for together than it was to come down here. And we still need her so – there's nobody in the whole Unit with one half her ability, or her judgment or her devotion and imagination.

It will mean working about six months under the French with the idea of leaving French workers trained to carry on – I will write you more as we know more. I think I am about the only Red Cross worker who is ready and anxious to go home – I want so much to get back and see you all – sometimes it seems as if, if I got home, I might wake up and find it all a dream – but perhaps I would miss her even more there than in this place that never knew her. Only I would be able to talk with people who knew her as I did and that nobody here did.

Here are the pictures you asked for – and the film of the picture I took of her – in case you want duplicates. I am sending prints to her best college friends. Do write to me again if you can – and tell me how you all are – you didn't say a word in your letter about yourselves. Is Elinor with you – and little Amelia and is Elinor getting stronger – I send you all so much love every day – I do hope you know it.

Sincerely,
Elinor Prudden

P.S. Please thank Elinor for her letter – it was dear of her to write.

VERDUN – April 15, 1919

Dear Amelia –

It must be a very long time since I have written you – but I get a little mixed up between the things I have actually written and the things I constant think of writing you. I hope you have been hearing frm me because I asked Mother to send on to ou the parts of my letters that she copies for Mary Hurlbutt and Tibs and a few other friends. I have hesitated about it before because I didn't know whether it would be harder or not to hear what the Unit is doing but I do want you to hear from me oftener than I can write. Every so often, tho' I have to write you directly – and you mustn't mind it's being long hand because it's really easier for me. I still takes me long to write on the Corona and I only use it to make my letters legible – I never learned the touch system as Rufus did. It was so like her to learn to do thoroughly and correctly the thing I just stumble along with in a hit-or-miss style.

Your letter was so welcome – I think you are simply wonderful to be so brave. And I have had such lovely letters from your sister-in-law and from Mr. Sargent. It was so good of them to write to me and make me feel one of you all – it makes me want so much to get home and see you all and know the rest of Rufus' family and her St. Paul home. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the poem – it just seems to me to say so exactly what we feel about her – and it is just such a lovely thing as she alone could inspire. I think you were dear to let me know it too. I feel sometimes as if I must hear all the people who knew here – there is no one in the Unit now who did – but then I realize that my own store of memories is greater than my need, if I just turn back the pages. It seems to be true that when I feel sad about her it is because I am not thinking really of her but just of myself

and my loss – and there is nothing but the warmest happiness in filling my mind so full of her, the old pictures of her, that there is no room for myself. Don't you think that is true?

I have just been in Paris for about 10 days shopping for the Unit – and you know we were there for a few days just before we came to Verdun. Both times I went again to the little American church that means so much to me. The first time I took some lovely yellow daisies into the little mortuary chapel – I don't know just why it was such a satisfaction to me to do it – and that afternoon Miss Lambie took some more flowers for the Unit. Both times I have been in Paris I have talked with the Red Cross chaplain, but even as late as the end of last week he had not heard from the army what regulations had been made and whether or not your wishes could be carried out. He even tried again during my last visit but got no answer. He will let me know because I have told him I want to be there if there should be another service – tho' we both believe they will do as you ask. I'm so glad you decided as you did.

Now, I am back at Verdun and we are continuing our preparation for helping the refugees who are expected back in numbers anytime now. So far those who have been coming to the dormitories and canteen have been making preliminary visits and even the temporary resources have not been ready for them. They are so marvelously plucky and so unhesitating in their patience and hope of rebuilding. We are most lucky to be here to know them.

Thank you again for your letter – and do write again when you can – I'm somore than glad to see a letter from you. And please tellmehow ou are and how your father is and are you going to Chatham – I wonder if Elinor has gone back yet. My family has enjoyed so much knowing Rice Thompson.

Much love to you both,
Elinor Prudden

P.S. Just as I had sealed this letter and was about to drop it in the mail box I received a big bunch of mail, part of which has been very much held up. In it was your father's very dear letter written Feb. 11. I am so grateful for it – and for the inspiration of his wonderfully brave spirit. I received the draft, too, to be used for the books for the boys at Savenay, and I think it was so good of him to add to the plan. I'm afraid I haven't written you since I left about what happened to the idea – I'm sorry. I gave it up after talking the matter over very thoroughly with the Red Cross authorities because they succeeded in getting thro' headquarters

and the American Library Association a large assignment of books – just what I would have gotten, but which they were really equipped to provide. Then for a while we considered providing a kitchen for special diets – the boys get so tired of the monotonous and none-too-tasty “mess,” and the hospital provision for special diets were really hardly adequate. But that too was given up because it was found that the necessary improvements could be worked out by the Red Cross and the hospital authorities without any outside help. I was just as glad because I think we would all rather have anything for Rufus of a more permanent nature ---tho’ the need for a while was really urgent. Then I left Savenay and now am on the lookout for the needs of Verdun. Shall I keep the draft for the present till some scheme presents itself that seems really worthy ---and then write you again about it? It seems as if we ought to find some of the needs of the children or along public health lines that would be a real satisfaction to help meet.

I want to thank you again for Rufus’ watch – I couldn’t have anything of her near me that would be a more constant satisfaction day and night – it really is a joy to wear it.

Elinor’s letter of March 15 reached me yesterday too – that just shows how crazy mail is – when two letters written over a month apart arrive at the same time! I am enclosing the passport picture she asked me to send via you – I only hope she doesn’t think I look like that all the time. I just can’t thank you enough for all these letters from you all – it is such a joy to feel that I belong to you. It seems a long time to wait before I can see you all, but we may be of use here. Our work has hardly begun yet, and it is impossible to prophecy.

Much love to you all again.

APPENDIX

More of Ruth’s letters from the train travelling east.

Nov. 18, 1918

Dear, dear ADC,

It has been a rush toward the end, but I’m glad of the days we’ve had together this fall, even tho’ I was grumbling at the delay! You’re so kind to be doing everything for me here that I don’t have a chance to write without your knowing it. The trunk man has gone and you’re sending the messages for me. I can’t begin

to thank you for all you've done nor to tell you how I'll miss you and Daddy. You must know how I love you both.

Here's to when I return. Keep well both of you. RC

JUST PAST TOLEDO – Nov. 19, 1918

Dear Father and ADC,

It's been a nice drizzly travelling day and we've sort of loafed along comfortably without hurrying ourselves. I surmise that we may be a little late, but I haven't cared enough about it to inquire.

There's a soldier and three women behind me who talk war all the time and read letters from a son over there. It sounds as tho' they had picked the soldier up just to treat him to the letters. When the letters lagged I studied French ; when they were interesting I pricked up my ears and surveyed the passing landscape. From the tone of voice I judged the reader didn't mind who overheard and like Mrs. Lightner's friend of the Christmas box was rather proud that all should hear.

I've wondered a little what sort of a sensation I'd produce if I hauled out Peggy from beneath the seat (where I've artfully concealed her) and played upon her. Peggy is the inspiration of the moment and is an easier way of spelling Pegasus which I'm not sure of anyway. But the name seems particularly fit for she's a cross between a horse in her action and a bird as contrasted to my longhand speed. And she's such a beautiful creature with her folding wings. I'm more grateful to you, ADC, every minute for not letting me get that clumsy bulgy National. Her nickname would have been Carrie for sure. But I'd rather carry Peggy than Carrie Nation.

The lady, oozing perfume and rhinestones and with a Germanic thick-lensed husband got off at South Bend much to my infinite relief. She took up so much more than her half of the section because the perfume penetrated the whole car. The chief item of interest now that she has departed is the gold-bowed porter who has spent most of the day perusing the Christian Science Monitor. I was able to get only a worthless Chicago news and was quite envious. And speaking of CS, the "boy" in France writes that his aunt or some fond relative deluges him with CS tracts. They fall out of every letter and he is "good and tired of them," but it seems that when he's feeling particularly homesick he gets very conscientious and reads them all. But isn't it a mean advantage to take?

I thought of you at lunchtime today and goodness knows how many more times and I've wondered just what you're doing. Perhaps you practice on Harry some to get some training for those letters that are coming. The tin box and the pink box and the box from 91 are somehow stuffed into my suitcase and I dare not disturb them for they're put in like a Chinese puzzle and I might never get them back. (I'm beginning to have that fear in returning "Mlle Gandel") so I'm nibbling on Mary's fudge and please tell her it's very delicious. I loved the picture the boys drew and wish you could see them. Billy got the idea all right when he pictured me laden with blanket roll and suitcase and typewriter and Howard gives me my choice between a peaceful green hillside or the heavens thick with planes and falling shells with soldiers below standing patiently waiting to be shot. I'm sure ADC will appreciate them.

Are you missing the souclistic anarchistic suffragistic IWW Bolschevic from your midst? Life must seem tame already with the thorn removed. Can a thorn be spanked? Because I'm missing you lots already. But PLEASE remember that you, Daddy, being a reliable Republican, I trust you to put \$300 and cost of ticket on my statement. You know it won't hurt me to overdraw my allowance, so please do as I ask and ADC, see that it's done. Then ADC I trust you to furnish me with a picture of you and of the others from time to time and F to see that it's done. And those seem to be all the instructions I have to offer this time except to keep well.

As to the Corona I don't think you, whoever you are, should have done it, and please remember I've been accumulating a gift account for just such an emergency. But I'm grateful for it anyway and thank (you) a lot. I sometimes think if you had kicked me out of the house it would have been easier going, but just the same I'm glad you didn't. Will try to post this at Cleveland. Love and lots of it to you and all.

P.S. Daddy, I asked the conductor (not the porter) where the time changes. You won't believe me, but he said Buffalo. (\$5, please.)

PITTSFIELD – Nov. 20, 1918

Dear, dear Father and ADC,
The rain continues so this has been a prize dustless trip. But the porter is better at reading the Monitor than he is doing his duty – and you never heard such a

bear. CS doesn't seem to benefit him at all, tho' there's no telling, he might be much worse without it.

I expected to get up in time to mail some letters going to NY and Utica at Albany, but slept until just as we were getting into the station. Will mail this in Boston, if I remember it.

Last night we had a table d'hote dinner for \$1 – very good. I overheard one man remark it was a well-balanced meal and good economy both for the railroad and the public. The dining car superintendent could plan economically and we got a dinner that would have cost much more a la carte. It wasn't elaborate, but gave a choice or two. I wouldn't like it for breakfast because I wouldn't need a dollar's worth then, but for dinner it was very nice.

I'm afraid Wilson is going to give me the cold shoulder in crossing. It looks as tho' he were going to spurn the common herd. Those will be some movies worth seeing. I wonder if I shall have luck enough to see the triumphal procession under the Arch of Triumph as the newspaper obligingly puts it. Perhaps you'd recognize it and perhaps you won't.

There seems to be a patch of snow on one of the little foothills here. Do you suppose it can be? Nothing else like it anywhere about.

I can't realize that we're not passing all the familiar country on the way to Chatham. To be sure the season doesn't look quite right, but then. Will drop you another line when I've been to 992. Poor ADC. Will you have time to read my letters too? Love to all. RC

P.S. I think the ticket agent must have given you the time for NY not Boston train. The NY train left Chi at 10:25 and if our train got to Albany on time at 8:45 it couldn't possibly reach Boston at 11:55. That must be the time the NY train reaches NY. Hope I won't try to meet me. It's now 11:55 and we're not yet at Worcester, but at Westfield.

Have just consulted a RR Guide. The 10:25 is due in Boston 11:55 but on boarding this 10 a.m. train yesterday the Pullman conductor had my berth and all engaged for this train, the 10:25. Don't reach Boston till 2:55 now. Isn't that provoking? Will wire E. at Springfield.

The conductor says had I taken the 10:25 I would have had to change at Albany at 5:57 or some such hour this a.m. for a Boston local. We're on time, but not due till 2:55.

Later. Here we are half an hour from Worcester and have been here already a half hour with no show yet of moving on. Someone has murmured, hotbox. Isn't it disgusting? I asked the porter some time ago, when we'll reach Boston. twice. Says he, "I don't know. This is the first time Ah've seed this train." I thought he had gumption.

Later. 2:40. We've just reached Worcester. I think of you as finishing lunch. You may be thinking I'm with El, but I'm not. Our visit is cut to just four hours.

Nov. 21, 1918

Dear Father and ADC,

Rice and Elinor insisted on seeing me off last night. It was dear of them, but I'm afraid E will be so tired today. She looks that worn way she does when awfully tired. She had been in twice to meet me at 11:55 and 2:55, the latter time waiting for my late train, but she said she enjoyed watching the people.

After we got out to 992 I persuaded her to take me to Dr. Taft's. Just as we were leaving, Evelyn appeared, but we excused ourselves for a few minutes. Dr. Taft is one you can't hurry, and I should have liked to stay longer, but still it was a very satisfactory visit, so I got her opinion and so did E. The long and short of it is that she doesn't believe breaking up their home, even temporarily. She thinks it is all a question of E's New England conscience, plus a delicate constitution. She says REST, and not medicine is the only thing that will really fix her up. She suggested a semi-trained nurse who could live there who could live there and look after E and Top while Mrs. C did the housework, but agreed that if E liked, she and Mrs. C could come from 7 to 7. She might answer as well. She wants E to stay in bed with no duties on her mind. The point is Martha worried E and so she didn't help her. E likes Mrs. C and gets along better with her. Martha was waiting for a definite answer as to whether E would take her back and I could see that E was worried for fear she should as everyone tells her maids are so hard to get. But I was very decided about telling her to skip M and get Mrs. C even at additional expense, because the latter can do about 4 times as much, is willing to get Top up and bath her mornings. In fact, to take entire charge of her as well as the house and the ordering. In fact, she would be a regular working housekeeper. She will give up a cleaning job at the Widener library, if she thinks

E will employ her regularly. She will get a month's leave of absence so that E can try her out. I tell E it's cheaper than the sanatorium that Dr. T suggested to her and cheaper than having a nurse plus Mrs. C. I hope she will settle her mind to it and forget it. Tell MCC but not the details. Rice resents the way everything leaks between Mrs. HHC and Martha though neither know our last anxiety came Mrs. HHC as I was very careful not to mention it.

I did have such a nice visit with them and they were so dear with oyster cocktails (raw oysters in tomato sauce in tumblers), ice cream and candy. I didn't see enough of R to make me mad! Just enough to make realize how patient he is with E. He takes almost all the care of Top when he's home. And I wish you could see her mind him. She isn't a bit afraid of him now needless to say, and they have great roughhouses together. She has grown much bigger and even more beautiful and looked more like a girl in that cunning smocked dress with her long hair but she won't keep a ribbon and has that same trick of stroking the top of her head. E tried on her new wardrobe for me, and she is dear in the coat and cap and dress.

The apartment is more settled, of course, than when we were there and I think it is very attractive. They say CB snipped at her twine rug mats (the two big ones). She objected to a hat C. Minnie had bought. Well, Blanche, that's all I can afford. But apparently she would like to spend for E as well as CM and L. Rice takes the biggest shine to CM and E says she has been the only one who understood how tired E has been. I didn't expect she would have been so friendly.

We saw Evelyn as I said, for about half an hour. She brought a huge bunch of violets for ? and AC and explained that AC couldn't come in as it was??? Birthday and they were having her for dinner, when the bell rang and in walked AC. She said she thought she'd come anyway, and I did appreciate it. She brought us theses small boxes of candy. It's lucky I unloaded some of the baby's things at Es. But won't we have a treat on the steamer. Evelyn said she likes her work. She was afraid she might have to drop out but has now gotten her second wind. Elliott has been cited in the Order of the Day. They have had a cable from him since November 11, or so they know he's safe. They were more worried since before they had heard so many cases like the Peabody's. They were more worried since then.

We are nearing the city and I will stop. Got up at 5:30 as that was the easiest way of getting warm. The car was roasting last night, but cooled off toward a.m. Haven't caught cold so don't worry.

So much love to all, RC.